

Appln. No. 10/654,748
Amendment dated May 17, 2006
Reply to Office Action dated February 17, 2006

Remarks/Arguments

The foregoing amendments and these remarks are in response to the Office Action, dated February 17, 2006. At the time of the Office Action, claims 1-17 were pending in the present application. Claims 1, 3, 6-8, 14, 16 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102. Claims 4 and 5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103. Claims 2, 9-13 and 15 were indicated as containing allowable subject matter but were objected to as depending from rejected parent claims. Claims 1-17 remain in the present application.

Claim Amendments

Before turning to the claim rejections, Applicant wishes to note that amendments have been made to claims 11 and 16. These amendments are not made in response to the Office Action. Rather, they are made to correct issues noted by Applicant upon further review. In the case of claim 11, step (h) has been amended to recite that steps (f) and (g) -- the other steps recited in claim 11 -- are the steps being repeated. Claim 16 has been amended to change its dependency.

Art-Based Claim Rejections

Claims 1, 3, 6-8, 14, 16 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,716,719 ("Takahashi"). Each of the independent claims will be addressed in turn below.

Claim 1

Claim 1 has been amended to recite that, when the engine is operating at part load, the supply of fuel to the one or more other nozzles of each of the combustors in the selected first pair is substantially restricted, while the supply of fuel to the pilot nozzle of each of the combustors in

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the selected first pair is continued. Further, the supply of fuel is also continued to the pilot nozzle and the at least one other nozzle of each of the non-selected combustors.

It is respectfully submitted that the method recited in claim 1, as amended, is not anticipated by Takahashi. Takahashi describes a two-stage combustion type gas turbine combustor 1. The combustor is provided with a gas primary fuel nozzle 103 and a secondary fuel nozzle 104. The primary and secondary fuel nozzles 103, 104 are fluidly connected to a fuel line 2 through a primary fuel line 201 with a manifold 202 and a secondary fuel line 203 with a manifold 204, respectively. The primary and secondary manifolds 202, 204 each have branch lines, which correspond to the number of combustors. As shown in FIG. 1 of Takahashi, the flow of fuel to all primary fuel nozzles 103 is controlled by the fuel control valve 4, and the flow of fuel to all secondary fuel nozzles 104 is controlled by the fuel control valve 4 as well as the switching valve 15

The Takahashi system does not permit selective restriction of fuel flow to individual combustors. In short, Takahashi is an all or nothing system with respect to supply the fuel. For instance, if the supply of fuel to the primary nozzle 103 is restricted for one combustor, then it is restricted to the primary nozzle 103 of all combustors. Likewise, if the supply of fuel to the secondary fuel nozzle 104 is restricted for one combustor, then it is restricted to the secondary fuel nozzle 104 of all combustors. The Office Action appears to recognize this about Takahashi when it notes that the system in Takahashi provides "the required fuel split in all combustors" (emphasis added). As a result, the system of Takahashi cannot be used to selectively restrict or continue the supply of fuel to the various fuel nozzles in the manner recited in claim 1.

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In light of the above, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is distinguishable over Takahashi. As a result, claims 2-13 depending therefrom are necessarily over the cited art. Therefore, the rejection of claims 3 and 6-8 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and the rejection of claims 4 and 5 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is moot.

Claim 14

Similar to claim 1, claim 14 has been amended to recite that the supply of fuel to the one or more other nozzles associated with the selected first combustor is substantially restricted, while the supply of fuel to the pilot nozzle of the first combustor is continued. Meanwhile, the supply of fuel to both the pilot nozzle and the other nozzles of the non-selected combustors is also continued. Therefore, for at least the reasons presented in connection with claim 1, Takahashi does not disclose each and every elements of claim 14. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claim 14 based on Takahashi has been overcome. Because claim 14 is distinguishable over Takahashi, dependent claims 15-17 are necessarily distinguishable over Takahashi.

Objected to Claims

Applicant appreciates the Examiner's indication that claims 2, 9-13 and 15 contain allowable subject matter but are objected to as depending from rejected parent claims. However, Applicant believes that rewriting these claims in independent form is unnecessary because the independent claims from which they ultimately depend have been distinguished over the cited art.

New Claims

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Applicant presents new claims 18-20. Claims 18 and 19 further define that the supply of fuel is continued to the pilot nozzle and the at least one other nozzle of each of the non-selected combustors so as to substantially maintain the base load exit temperature associated with each of the non-selected combustors. Claim 18 depends from claim 14, and claim 19 depends from claim 1. Thus, for all of the reasons set forth above, claims 18 and 19 distinguish over Takahashi and the other prior art references of record. New independent claim 20 presents an alternative definition of a method according to aspects of the invention. The some of the steps recited in the method of claim 20 are similar to the steps set forth in claim 1. Therefore, for at least the reasons set forth in connection with claim 1, claim 20 is distinguishable over Takahashi and the other prior art references of record.

Conclusion

In light of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the objections and rejections set forth in the Office Action have been overcome. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider the claims currently pending in the application; withdraw the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103; allow pending claims 1-20; and promptly issue a timely Notice of Allowance.

Date: 5/17/2006

Respectfully submitted,


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